

# OUR UNCLE HO

## *His Native Village and Childhood*

by HOAI THANH  
and THANH TINH

### NGHE AN PROVINCE AND ITS LANDSCAPE

**T**HE song of you kept ringing in our ears on our way to Uncle's native village. But now the landscape includes not only green mountains and blue water. In this scenery, still with green hills and blue water, we were enraptured by the soft green ricefields, the new and graceful iron bridges, the bright red roofs of houses, especially by the hedges of young bamboo-trees and the factories which have sprung up from our land as if in a wonderful dream.

From Vinh, we took the provincial road to Do Luong. At kilometre 14 we walked about one kilometre to the left and arrived at his paternal village named Kim Lieu. On the road two Sen limestone peaks to the south of Sen village is his maternal village named Chua. Both these villages lie between the Lam river and the provincial road.

We were on the land of the greatest patriots and the most famous revolutionaries of Viet Nam: Mai Hac (1), Phan Dinh Phung, Phan Boi Chau (2), Tran Phu (3). Land of heroes but also land of poets, among whom was Nguyen

Du (4), author of the well-known *Kim Van Kieu* ballad.

In the most dramatic hours of our history, these provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh were more than once the last bastion against the enemy. In 1471, when King Le Loi (5) joined the Chinese feudalists' invasion army, Nghe An was his rear. That land had fed his resistance force for over three years before they succeeded in liberating the whole country. Over three centuries later, in 1789, when the Ching (a Chinese dynasty) invaded the Nam Yen (6) provinces of Nghe An and Thanh Hoa (its neighbour), that Nguyen Huu (6) recruited an army 50,000 strong with which he crushed the invaders and retaken Hanoi capital.

Then, under French rule, this region was the centre of activity of all anti-French movements — from the Van Thanh (7) movement to the Dong Du (8) movement and the Nguyn Sinh (9) uprising. It was on the road between Vinh and Uncle's village that 217 fighters in the insurrection died on September 12, 1926, in Nghe An. Now there are more mountains and forests than ricefields. The soil is arid and poor. In summer, the blazing sun and hot wind, blowing from the South-West, dry up land, plants and grass

and harass the people. Added to these are heavy rainfalls and violent storms which have been known to change entire mountain contours.

The Meos in the Nghe An mountain region relate that once Heaven got angry and blew thousands of people and even mountains into pieces. The history of Viet Nam also recorded many big storms and floods such as the storm in 1937 which shook the earth and made the water of the Lam river as red as blood.

However, ferocious nature can be tamed, provided that man strives and struggles. The inhabitants of Nghe An have struggled without cease.

These qualities — firmness, perseverance, industriousness and thrift — have been tempered in the historic conditions peculiar to Nghe An.

The long-term struggle against nature and foreign aggressors has created a tradition of enduring hardship and solidarity in fighting, and a rich cultural life full of heroic deeds. This is the tradition of industriousness and studiousness of the scholars and students; folk literature with legends, folk-tales, traditional operas, singing, folk-songs and lullabies, and our great

poets and writers, such as Nguyen Du and Phan Boi Chau, also went to parties of weavers' singings.

It was in that framework that the future President of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, com. Linh Ho, was hard to get little land in proportion to the number of people — in his village where the average per capita land area was only 0.600 sq.m. Moreover, almost all the land was in the hands of a few rich families. Some — at the time of Uncle's childhood — owned as much as 900 sq.m. and no buffaloes and oxen. The majority of the villagers worked on hired land. They were always in rags, more often in linocloth than in trousers, hence Sen village was also called Loin-cloth village. Despite this sad plight, the toiling people did not lose heart. The villagers have always been very fond of singing. During our visit to Uncle's village we heard a woman lull her baby:

### HIS GENEALOGY

Uncle's father was second laureate of the competitive examination for the doctorate degree, but was not granted the degree. Uncle belongs to the branch of Nguyen Sinh. In the Le dynasty (12), some members of this branch graduated at various royal examinations, in the Nguyen dynasty nobody graduated, except his father. His family had very little land. Nearly all his relatives had to work as day-labourers and some, even in the August 1945 Revolution, have known less hardships.

How did these happen to be a second graduate of the doctorate degree in the Nguyen Sinh branch? Uncle's father, Nguyen Sinh Sac, was born into a peasant family and was the son of a concubine. His parents died when he was still a boy and he had to live with his elder half-brother. He was treated like a servant. It is related that on one occasion, not finding the vegetables he had prepared for his master, the master-in-law buried the whole pot at his head. He suffered very much and thought of a way out. In those days, the only way out was to run away. He suffered well his sufferings might come to an end. In his village, scholar Hoang Xuan An, a native of Chua village, in the same locality tried to learn from him. He studied while minding buffaloes. He studied very hard, learning his lessons even when sitting on the back of his buffalo as it was pounding rice.

Shortly after, scholar An returned to Chua village. He asked the cruel elder brother



President HO CHI MINH's native land, which he left still in his teens.

to let him take his younger brother Sac to live with him. The other agreed readily. As a poor boy still had to drive buffaloes to pasture in Chau village but thanks to the care of the scholar he had more time for studying. Unintelligent, the boy made tremendous progress and within a few years was well-known as an outstanding student. In addition to his rather handsome Scholar An has two daughters who were both well-educated. The elder daughter Hoang Thi Lan seems to be a very handsomely and studious young man. The scholar talked to his wife of his intention to give Sac their daughter's hand but met with a resounding "No."

"Are there no more young men left that you have to give your daughter to a servant?" she asked.

"But he is a brilliant student and will certainly pass the royal examination," he insisted.

In the end the mother gave in.

The scholar gave the young couple a small cottage in his home and a plot of rice-fields. Uncle, his elder sister Thanh and eldest brother Khiem were all born in that small cottage.

In 1904, his father graduated as Licentiate. Later, his family moved to Hue. Shortly after, the scholar returned to his village to bring him to Hue. His father studied first at Giam school, then at the Agricultural school.

In 1909, Nguyen Sinh Sac was sent to Thanh Hoa to preside over an examination in that province. He accompanied by his eldest son. His wife, who stayed at home, died shortly after, when giving birth to a boy named Ngu. Sac regretted this loss and sold his village and committed him to his parents-in-law then set off for the capital to sit for the royal examination and graduated as second graduate of the doctorate degree.

After graduation he came back to Vinh town. His colleagues came to see him, promising to celebrate his success. He said, "I am the poorest that he had just lost his wife and was very poor and had nowhere to hold the celebration. But this was the first time an inhabitant, not only of the Central Cu commune but of the whole Lam Thinh canton, had graduated at a royal examination and villagers were very proud of his honour. No refusal was possible. A house in Xuan La commune was bought with public funds. The 500 villagers spent their money to buy the house and carried it in one trip to their village and rebuilt it in one day on public land around which cactus and bamboo trees had been planted the day before.

Then the doctor's family moved to the new house in Seo village and the scholar became famous in the region. He, however, did not like his new social status. Time and again he played truant to Hue to take office. He ran a school at Thanh Chuong than at Nghi Loc and found pretext to travel far and wide. At that time, many scholars after

their graduation joined the revolution, using their fame to serve the movement. For that reason the colonialists and the Court forced him to come to Hue to take the office of secretary of King. Of course, the scholars asked to follow him, but he said, "You had better stay home. It is very likely that I shall not be a mandarin. Only the rich are mandarins." Other people are mandarins for honours and wealth but the doctor is a mandarin to save his head."

During his stay in Hue, he sometimes attended the literary debates of the scholars in the Doi Lan house and used to talk to them during the breaks. The scholar said, "The mandarins are slaves among slaves, and the others are more slave than the others." These words exerted a great influence upon the minds of the youths.

In 1909 he was appointed head of Binh Khe district in the mountainous area of Huong Lien. He was a good and honest lawsuits but settled all quarrels amicably and prisoners were released. Noticing that situation during his inspection, the chief of Binh Dinh province immediately removed him from office?

After his dismissal, the scholar did not return to his village. He roamed about for some time then went to settle in South Vietnam. It was said that due to some reason he painstakingly learned French from a dictionary. According to Mr. Pham Trong Binh (now working in the National Library) when this scholar in Saigon in 1928, and to a few other Southerners, the scholar was usually seen sitting in front of a Chinese restaurant in Ly Son Street in Saigon. He wore a black cotton jacket and trousers like a southern peasant. He gave medical prescriptions to patients and charged just enough for his meagre living. He led a simple and frugal life. His daily meal consisted of only one boiled egg, one fish sauce and one bowl of rice.

He lived in a pagoda near Ong Lang bridge. He helped the illiterate to memorize prayers and they gave him free lodging.

He was still very fond of travelling. Once he walked to Angkor (Cambodia). He also visited Ho Khanh pagoda in the Tam Doi province (Saigon). The scholar did not cease to follow him. When he heard of Uncle's arrival in Can tho, the doctor sent word to his son. As a result, the scholar's enemies resounded more and more in his home country, the enemy was afraid their relations might be established between father and son and the old man was forced to move from Saigon to Sa Dec. Here he made friends with Nam Giao, an old peasant who was in possession of some traditional medicines.

In the proximity of Nam Giao's house were a pagoda and the Tran Sanh shrine built in the middle of a bay. The old doctor stayed now at home, now in the pagoda and now travelled here and there.

Many areas in the South were tormented with mosquitoes. Having no mosquito-

net, to get a sleep poor people had to crawl into a kind of red bag. So whenever he travelled he always carried a red bag, hence his nickname "Red bag Doctor." Once in 1930 he went to Chau Doc to call a sick old friend from rural Vinh Linh. He fell ill on his way home, fainted and lay on the roadside. Nam Giao came to his home. At that time the old doctor was ill and could not refuse to take food and medicines. His illness worsened. He was carried to the pagoda where he passed away.

While the old doctor was wandering in the hills, his daughter Ngu Thanh and son Khiem in his native village came in contact with Doi Qayen and Doi Phan, the two leaders of the insurgents in Nghi An at that time. They had jailed him and lived in forced residence for a very long time.

Thanh was very lively and courageous, well versed in Chinese literature and skilled in eastern medicines. She once went to Vink town and kept the bearing of the non-commissioned officers of the Native guard in order to take guns from the garrison to arm the insurgents at Bo Lo. The provincial head Doi Phan, Ngu cured her. Pregnant women give birth to children but when pregnant you give birth to guns." She also went to Hue to bring the gun to the leader of the insurgents in her village. It was said that this was but a pretext to transfer arms. She was sent in exile to Quang Ngai province where she died in prison during his stay in Hue.

There was a time when Coong followed his father to school. For the boy there was no comparison between the class-room and the ponds in Chu and Sen villages had plenty of ponds and each pond was a whole world of wonder. His greatest hobby was to watch other people fish.

He had a great thirst for knowledge. One day it was going to rain. When his mother had seated the hand of a youth asking where it came from, the youth replied that it came from the sky. He asked, "Is there a place in the sky, are there people over there?" And the youth was at a loss. The youth is now over eighty years old.

However great was his thirst for knowledge, he could not understand the greatest things which were undefined at that time. Tong Duy Tan's (ta) uprising in Thanh Hoa had just been suppressed. The movement in Phan Dinh Phung in Ha Tinh and under Hoang Hoa Thanh (11) in Yen The were in the thick of fighting against the colonialist troops.

Coong heard of these uprisings on other people's talk. They have left very deep marks on his mind, however. Twenty years later, when he worked as a cook's helper in a restaurant, he closed his eyes as he recalled that after his capture Tong Duy Tan grabbed his stomach with a sharp piece of bamboo to kill him.

The situation was worsening. The invaders were very barbarous and the traitors very cowardly, so the people were very angry. The scholars but could not see where all their sacrifices would lead them. This situa-

tion was well described in the lyrical prose made by Binh Thuc, a native of Chua village:

This will certainly be a great battle  
The river will be filled with corpses and the swords  
fed with human necks.

## HIS STAY IN HUE

COONG went to Hue at the age of seven or eight. There was then no railway between Vinh and Hue. Along the three-hundred-kilometre road through five provinces, now going through crowded streets and villages, now climbing up high mountains, the youth grew up and were much widened. Coong began his studies but the greater part of them did not come from books. Together with his older brother and some friends Coong used to go on excursions. A friend of his whose father was a mandarin, had a baby brother. They all went to play. During a flood they made a raft with banana-trunks and went on pleasure trips. Usually they wandered from one longane tree to another. He had seen many things never seen in Chua and Sen villages. There were high fortresses, big houses and French soldiers who seemed to always do drunk. There was also a bridge spanning the Perfume river.

Little Coong was leading a merry life when a great misfortune swooped on him. His mother died. It was reported that in 1909 while the doctor went to Thanh Hoa accompanied by his elder son to preside over an examination in the province, Coong remained at home with his mother. They lived in a dark house which was part of a former barrack opposite the building of the Board of Control. Coong was a frail boy and was the youngest member of the family for nearly ten years, so his mother was very fond of him. His mother then gave birth to a boy whom they named Xin. Both the mother and the baby were very weak. She was ill. Lacking care and medical treatment she was still holding the new-born in her arms. The baby continued to suck until its mother's limbs froze. She died. But that because he sucked the dead mother's milk, little Xin was always ill and died a few years later in Chua village.

## RETURN TO HIS NATIVE VILLAGE

THE whole family returned to their native village. Coong was now called Nguyen Tat Thanh, was ten years old. After the two journeys and all that he had heard and seen in Hue, the changes in his family, all the local stories, added to his natural endowments, little Thanh's scope of knowledge and thinking exceeded by far the level of those of his peers. At the age of ten, he came to Chua village in Sen village. Thanh had to cross waste land called Quan village.

land, and there he was often teased by his school-boy friends over whom he presided in silence. His mind was occupied by more important things. Phan Boi Chau relates that at that time little Thanh loved two verses made by Tu Yen which he himself used to recite:

*Everyday do not forget that all your deeds are recorded in history books.*

*The measured way to rise up through literature.*

He was really a wonder to be able to appreciate these verses at his age. Literature here means official career through literary examinations at that time. The doctor himself had no time to go to the universities. He spent most of his time to teaching. After graduation he was reluctant to take up his office but his family insisted. He had to go to teach to keep up his children. He used to say to his students, "What is the use of literary examinations?"

Actually he attended them but little of his children's studies. The little time he stayed at home, he used to compose maxims and write them on the wall to teach his children. His teaching was not systematical or regular. When old Chau recommended him of his children's education he sent little Thanh to a class held by Hoang Van Quynh, a licentiate who was well known in town. Little Thanh also studied with some other teachers. But Thanh did not study for examination purposes. He was very fond of reading, especially the Chinese novels *Three Kingdoms* and *Go West*. He paid little attention to doing exercises but very often asked the meaning of words.

Thanh's intelligence was then developing rapidly. It was a very good, bold and active boy who craved for knowledge did not confine himself to ready-made rules and though very gentle by nature he was also very intelligent.

At that time Thanh read much and also played much. He was fond of playing chess and chessboards. Chang mountain where there were many places good for playing. There were times when he wandered by himself in front of the Commune shrine — Than Ca Shrine. From there he could get a very fine view of the village. There were also times when he went with some friends as far as Ru Muon, Don Loi temple and even Ru Thanh, many dozens of kilometres from his village.

In his studies as well as in his playing, Thanh always had initiative. As he was growing up there were other things besides studying and playing. In the early days houses built by the villagers, the two brothers occupied the fifth room next to the kitchen. In this room there was a wooden bed by the window. On the bed days a hammock was hung in the room. From the window one could see the far away Ru Chung. Quite near, on the left was Dien's a forge which remained with him until all day long. On the right was the Coc well. In the old days the insurgents of Chang village threw their broad-bladed swords in this well

when the enemy arrived, and fished them out after the capture. Near the right in the garden there were a few bombs among the lemon and shaddock trees.

What occupied his mind then was the corvee forced upon the people by the French to build the Cua Rao highway which was called "the pacification" of the country and Laos and the exploitation of our natural resources: For the inhabitants of Chau and Sen villages as well as those of the whole provinces of Nghe An this was a great calamity. Everyone from the age of 10 to 50 had to go to corvee. Cua Rao was situated upstream of the Lam river near the Vietnamese-Lao border, two hundred and four kilometers from Vinh. Cua Rao was then known as an unhealthy area. Actually this was not due to the climate but to the prevailing harsh colonial regime. The workers were fed ill-cooked rice and lacked medical care. At night they slept on the roadsides, in the bushes. Savage beatings by French supervisors were of common occurrence. Thus many people met their death there and those who could not bear it in their villages were bags-of-bones and disease-ridden. Added to that, superstition, tales about mountain ghosts and water monsters, and prejudices against the highlanders frightened the wretched workers all the time. People recommended each other:

*Those who go to Cua Rao  
Should not forget to bring  
with them mats to roll and  
unroll.*

To unroll the mat to lie on at night in the bushes. To rip it up was to beat it to pieces for burning. The day of departure from one's village was to be remembered by one's family as the day of one's death. As groups of people in rags left their homes, painful rhymed proverbs were heard:

*The Hong mountain is still  
high.  
The Great Sea is usually  
full,*

*The King of Amnon(14) has  
surrendered to the French  
Making the people very  
wretched.*

or

*This time there will be  
great misery;  
Never has one seen such  
King and mandarins.*

*The villagers left carrying  
their luggage*

*While the whole village said  
prayers to the high sky.*

*Pray to the destitutes in Pole,  
Star and Southern Cross.*

*Don't force people in the  
plain to go to work in the  
mountains.*

There were people who refused to go on corvee and fled from their villages. Those living near the jungle could not be found. They knew that the refugees would return home at night, so he often raided their houses at night to round them up. During these nights, villages



*The house where President Ho Chi Minh lived in his childhood. Changing hands many times later, it was recently bought back and rebuilt on its initial site.*

were upset by gong and drumbeats, moving lamps and torches, these weeping and dogs barking. These painful sights were witnessed so many times and not only in Nghe An province. During the time the poet Nguyen Khuyen(15) cried in pain for the sad plight of those who had to go on corvee at Yen Bai:

*Over a thousand miles of  
green forests and red mountains.*

*Many thousands of people  
toil in unhealthy areas.*

*The song A T A (Asia) has  
some verses:*

*I hear also of Lao Cai, Yen  
Bai,*

*So many thousands of people  
cultivating mountains and  
dredging rivers.*

*How unhealthy these lands  
of mountains and jungle.*

*Corpse were thrown into  
deep waters and bones  
hoisted up in remote caves.*

Under French rule, corvee was a task that occurred all over the country at that time and for many dozen years to come.

The doctor being a mandarin, his family was exempt from corvee. But he was very grieved by the sad plight of the people. He had a few ricefields left him by his parents to give some money to each of his villagers who had to go on corvee at Dien's. He had to really queue for a mandarin. Hence he not himself gone through days of wretchedness never could he have done such generous deeds.

This was a second shock for Thanh. The pain that grieved him this time was more intense compared with his mother's death. From the sad plight of corvee he deduced other miseries that daily took place around him. Taxes were increasing and the people lived in greater poverty. No need to search far; Mr. Phung's family in his hamlet could never eat their fill all the year round. His mind was filled with the pangs of life at Huo the star trip in great state by the King, and the Nam Giao(16) ceremonies. Something had certainly to be done to lead

his relatives and villagers out of this hellish existence.

In reality he was at a loss as what he could do. He had to wait for the Van Thanh movement had failed. In Ha Tinh, the insurgent troops under Phan Dinh Phung had dismantled building in Nghe An. Phan Boi Chau's plan to storm the chief town to surprise on the occasion of the enemy's national day (July 14, 1901) had failed. The time the insurgent troops under Hoang Hoa Tham had made a truce with the enemy. In the mind of the educated people at that time there was a struggle between the stubborn conservative tendency opposing all renovations and the eager tendency of learning from the West. The situation was rather complicated because the conservative group was composed of two categories: one was xenophobe and the other was xenophile because honours and wealth through the old fashioned way of study. The new group also included two categories: one intending to learn to fight the French but the other learned French with a view to go.

Why did they not want to go? Phan Boi Chau used to call on the doctor. Young Thanh often listened to their talks. Phan Boi Chau had an extraordinarily attractive personality and eloquence. Even now, after half a century, his poems still show the great warmth of his patriotism and heroism to which even the old people could remain insensitive. Then why was our youth not charmed? The age of fifteen is the age of hot blood and he was fond of travelling, why had he refused? According to me he was not without admiration for Mr. Phan. The reason was that he was a youth of heart but also of head, and his opinion was not completely like Mr. Phan's. He felt, though not very clearly, something wrong with Mr. Phan's policy of reliance on the powerful mandarins and the fire of the royalist movement, of advancing a prince as the standard bearer of the uprising and chiefly of reliance on Japanese aid. So he mis-trusted study in Japan.

Shortly after Mr. Phan's departure for Japan, young Thanh went to Huo to join

his father. An incident occurred before he left.

Hearing of the Dong Du movement, the head of Nghe An province, Ton That Han, summoned all the scholars in his province to his presence. As the doctor was absent, Ton That Han wanted to jail the mayor of the doctor's village. Revolted by this glaring injustice, young Thanh went in a hurry to Vinh asking the province head to jail him in place of the mayor, Ton That Han had to cancel his order.

#### AGAIN IN HUE

Thanh studied at the Quoc Hoc school. It was housed in the former barracks of the royal marines, with big iron-wood pillars. The gate was crowned with a bell-tower. The school, in addition, to four primary classes and two senior primary classes had one special class no post-graduation. The curriculum included a little of natural sciences, of history and geography but the main subject was translation from French into Vietnamese and vice versa. At the beginning, the head-master was Norgemand who was at the same time a salt trader. He was married to a Vietnamese woman and spoke Vietnamese and was known under a Vietnamese name as Ngo De Man. After him came a certain Logion who had been in the French Foreign Legion. While De Thanh was still fighting the French, sometimes his troops captured French soldiers and took them to the Resistance base. In the then conditions the prisoners had the same life as their victors. People throughout the country rejoiced at the news that spread very rapidly that French soldiers were forced to go barefooted, to carry water and to pound rice. Logion has been one of these prisoners and the colonial administration rewarded him by making him headmaster. Such were the personalities at the Quoc Hoc school who on behalf of France were "civilizing the Annamites" at that time.

The aspect of Hue city was gradually changing. Besides the Trang Tien bridge, another bridge — the Bach Ho bridge — laid across the Perfume river was under construction. In 1907, the railway-line to Tourane was built and the following year the railway-line to Dong Ha. The French were growing in number, led a more luxurious life and became more arrogant while the people were

living in greater poverty. Salt tax, which was 0.25 piastre for 100 kilogrammes in 1897, rose to 2.25 piastres in 1906. The increase of poll tax, land tax and all other taxes broke countless families.

*Since the day the French sent their envoys to our country,*

*Owing to the copper and silver you and I (we) must be parted.*

Well aware of the people's hatred, the enemy was always afraid of surprise attack. In 1907, after forcing King Thanh Thai to abdicate in favour of his son, the enemy issued an order that anyone who went in the streets at night had to carry a lamp, lest he be arrested. When going out it caused much trouble to have one's lamp. There was then a song:

*To go out one must carry a lamp.*

*The wind blows it out and the wretched is all the more wretched.*

Meanwhile the traitorous mandarins were laying bare their mean and foul nature.

The people's patriotism, however, was still seething. From Japan Phan Boi Chau kept sending to the home-country literary works calling on the people to fight the French. After his return home from Japan in 1906, Phan Chu Trinh (20) sent a letter to the French government demanding reforms. His severe accusations of the mandarins: "For them the country is like a big market and the people are fish and meat... Their beggary habits have made them shameless," had a great repercussion among the people.

Immediately after, the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was set up in Hanoi and was warmly welcomed by the people (1907):

*The lectures are as crowded as festivals.*

*To the literary debates, people come like rain.*

A wave of new thought spread over the whole country, piercing the thick darkness piece by piece. After the banning of the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, another movement—the Modernization movement—was launched. Men were urged to cut their hair short, to wear short coats, to use local products, to open schools and trading companies. As it went deeper among the masses it took on a more combative character, turning into demonstrations, including corvees and taxation.

The first demonstrations broke out in Quang Nam province in March 1908 and

spread very rapidly to almost all provinces of Central Viet Nam. Early in April the inhabitants of Thus Thien province enthusiastically responded to the movement. The inhabitants of six provinces streamed to Hue. At Bau Vinh, Kim Luong, An Cua and Vi Da on the roads leading to Hue, stations were set up where the demonstrators with long hair had it cut short and their long tunics shortened. The demonstrators came and lay down on the Trang Tien Bridge, all around the palace of the French Senior Resident, the Thuu Phu and as far as Da Phu and along the An Cua road. The inhabitants of other districts joined them, bringing rice, cooking pots and mats and stayed for three days and nights on end demanding a reduction of taxes. The students of Giam school mixed with them and sang hymns to the demonstrators. The demonstrators called each other bosom brothers and this was a delight to the ears. The French took flight and asked King Day Tan to talk to the demonstrators. Day Tan rode a four horse carriage escorted by two rows of cavalry. Day Tan was then eight years old and though nobody gave him ear, he was allowed to go through. All others' carts and horses were stopped. The French took refuge in their houses. None of them could be seen in the streets. On the fourth day they carried out outright repression. French troops from two garrisons in Hue (one behind the palace of the Senior Resident) advanced and fired at the unarmed demonstrators. A skirmish took place on the Trang Tien bridge. Driven to extremity some people jumped into the river pulling down French soldiers with them. Blood was shed all over the bridge.

In other provinces, mass murders of innocent people were also perpetrated. A well-known scholar, Tran Quy Cap, who was then Head of the education service in Nha Trang was sentenced to death. Phan Chu Trinh, Huynh Huu Khanh (21), Nguo Duc Ke (22), Dang Nguyen Can (23), and others were sent in exile to Poulo Condore. Even those in possession of a map of Vietnam were put in jail. The enemy said that to have a map was to have a scheme to wrest back the country.

Then came the failure of the attempt to poison the French garrison in Hanoi (1908), the French attack on Yen The (1909), Dang Thai Than's (24) suicide in Nghe An (1910) and the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910).

Many people grew pessimistic. But, after witnessing the

unbending heroism of his compatriots and the enemy's barbarous repression, young Thanh became more thoughtful and was seething with the desire to save his country.

At that moment Thanh's father was dismissed from the office of head of district, the family was broken up and young Thanh gave up his studies, went to Phan Thiet and worked as a teacher at the Dauc Thanh school.

(To be continued)

#### NOTES

1. *Mai Hac De*: leader of an uprising against the Chinese invaders in 722, later proclaimed King.

2. *Phan Boi Chau* (1867-1941): leader of the Dong Du (Go East) movement and of many other movements against the French colonists from 1904 to 1915. In 1912 he was arrested in Shanghai and lived in forced residence at Hue. He died on October 29, 1941.

3. *Tran Phu*: first Secretary General of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. Arrested by the French in 1920. He was barbarously tortured and died in prison on September 6, 1931.

4. *Nguyen Du* (1765-1820): a great poet at the end of the 18th century, author of the master-piece in poetry, *Kim Van Kieu*.

5. *Lo Li*: leader of an uprising against the Ming invaders during the Ming-Tan dynasty war, he liberated Viet Nam and mounted the throne in 1428. He died in 1433.

6. *Nguyen Huu*: a national hero. He led the peasants in their struggle against various feudal rulers since 1771 and by 1796 had established in the south the *Chieu* — 1780 he smashed the Ching aggressive troops—200,000 strong — within five days.

7. *The Van Thanh movement*: a patriotic movement led by the scholars at the end of the 19th century (1885-1896).

8. *The Dong Du movement* (Go East) (1904-1909): a patriotic movement organized by the workers and peasants together with the intelligentsia throughout the country rose against the French imperialists and the feudal Court. The movement was strongest in the two provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh where the colonial and feudal power collapsed in many localities. A new power was set up by the people. The movement was followed by the Huynh Nhieu Tinh Soviet uprising.

9. *The Nghe-Trieb Soviet uprising*: in 1910 and 1931 under the leadership of the local branch of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, the workers and peasants together with the intelligentsia throughout the country rose against the French imperialists and the feudal Court. The movement was strongest in the two provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh where the colonial and feudal power collapsed in many localities. A new power was set up by the people. The movement was followed by the Huynh Nhieu Tinh Soviet uprising. From mid-1931, under the bloody repression of the French colonists the movement receded.

10. *The water is not yet carried*: the Vietnamese word "nuoc" means "water" and "country". This pun means also: "I have not yet discharged my duty toward my country."

11. *De Tham or Hoang Hoa Tham*: leader of an uprising against the French colonialists in the Lang Son (Lang Son province). Started in 1887. The uprising lasted for nearly thirty years. It had a great repercussion throughout the country. It caused heavy losses to the army. Tham was murdered by a traitor on February 10, 1913.

12. *The Le dynasty*: ruled Viet Nam from 1428 to 1545.

13. *Tong Day Tan*: a leader of the *Day* tribe in the French colonialists. He was captured on October 5, 1892.

14. *Annam*: former name of Viet Nam or former name of Central Viet Nam during French domination.

15. *Nguyen Khuyen*: a patriotic poet at the beginning of the 20th century.

16. *Nam Giao*: royal ceremony held every three years to worship Heaven — said by the feudalists to be the Father of the King.

17. *Prince Cuong De*: Born in 1867 and sent to Japan in 1905. To outward appearance he was president of the Society for the Restoration of Viet Nam but in fact he was barbarously tortured and died in prison on September 6, 1931.

18. *Hei Day Tan* (*Modernization*) was a society set up in 1904 by Phan Boi Chau and a number of scholars. It aimed at the establishment of an independent government. The society had Prince Cuong De as President.

19. *You and I* refers to husband and wife.

20. *Phan Chu Trinh* (1872-1946): a patriot who advocated capitalist democracy of reformist tendency.

21. *Huynh Thuc Khanh*: a laureate of the competitive examination for the doctorate degree in 1904, but he refused to take office. He was created a title by the French colonials in 1904 for his revolutionary activities. Released in 1921 he worked as a journalist. In 1946 he was Minister of Interior of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. He died in 1947.

22. *Ngo Duc Ke*: a laureate of the competitive examination for the doctorate degree but he refused to take office. He was created a title by the French colonials in 1904 for his revolutionary activities. Released in 1921, he worked as a journalist. He died in 1939.

23. *Dang Thai Mai*: a second laureate of the competitive examination for the doctorate degree and headmaster. He joined the Modernization Movement in 1904. In 1910 he was arrested by the French colonials. He died in 1932.

24. *Dang Nguyen Can*: an eminent personality in the Modernization Society. In 1910, encircled by French troops, he committed suicide to avoid from falling into the enemy's hands.